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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: U.S.' RESCUE AND RELIEF EFFORTS FOR TAIWAN

Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies focused its news coverage August 18 on the U.S. military helicopters coming to Taiwan for humanitarian assistance missions in the aftermath of Typhoon Morakot; on the mounting criticism against the Ma Ying-jeou administration for its delays and incompetence in assisting the typhoon victims; and on the on-going post-typhoon rescue efforts in southern Taiwan. In terms of editorials and commentaries, an editorial in the pro-unification "United Daily News" said assistance from the United States and China was "humanitarian" assistance, which should be above politics. A separate "United Daily News" op-ed, however, said several unusual "signals" from both sides of the Taiwan Strait in the wake of Typhoon Morakot have drawn the close attention of the United States, which decided in the end "to send troops to intervene." An analysis in the KMT-leaning "China Times" criticized the Taiwan government for delaying a request for assistance and said it has reduced the significance of the U.S. military's rescue mission. End summary.

A) "Humanity, Assistance by the United States and China Are All Humanitarian [Assistance]!"

The pro-unification "United Daily News" [circulation: 400,000] editorialized (8/18):

"Sunday afternoon at 2:45 pm, a U.S. C-130 transport aircraft with 'subdued markings' from [a U.S. airbase in] Okinawa, Japan, arrived at Tainan Air Force Base, completing its mission of carrying relief materials [to Taiwan] in the aftermath of Typhoon Morakot. This is the first time that a U.S. military aircraft has landed on Taiwan since Taiwan and the United States severed diplomatic ties in 1979. Taiwan's authorities defined such a move as 'humanitarian assistance that is above politics.' For Beijing, China's Taiwan Affairs Office (TAO) Spokesman Yang Yi said 'this is humanitarian aid to Taiwan conducted by the countries involved through civilian channels.' A U.S. naval vessel was bringing rescue helicopters to Taiwan on Monday, and such an effort should also be viewed as 'humanitarian assistance.' ... As a result, one cannot help but call it a major improvement over the past ten years [on Beijing's part] when Yang was able to define immediately the U.S. rescue mission as 'humanitarian aid.' ..."

B) "National Security Disaster [for Taiwan]; China and the United States Are Competing against Each Other in the Taiwan Strait"

Associate Professor from Central Police University's Department of Public Security opined in the pro-unification "United Daily News" [circulation: 400,000] (8/18):

"The damage caused by Typhoon Morakot and how the [Taiwan] government copes with it has put Taiwan under the spotlight of the international community. The absence of government leadership and the ineffectiveness of [Taiwan's] military in rescue operations are the first impressions commonly shared by the outside world. During this period, several unusual signals emerged from both sides of the Taiwan Strait, which have attracted the close attention of the United States and resulted in [Washington's] decision to send troops

to intervene. ... The signal that the [Taiwan] government sent to the outside world immediately [following the typhoon] -- '[we] want to rely on China, and [we] do not need [assistance from] foreign countries' undoubtedly confused the United States. ...

"More importantly, mainland China's 'China Youth' published an article by People Liberation's Army Major General Lo Yuan on August 14, discussing how both sides of the Taiwan Strait will build a military confidence-building mechanism. The article clearly indicated that 'if Taiwan continues to maintain its substantive military alliance with the United States and the United States still sees mainland China as its biggest potential rival, how would it be possible for mainland China to unilaterally adjust its military deployments? Thus, both sides should show their sincerity, seize such a rare opportunity to proactively discuss effective ways and means to establish a military confidence-building mechanism across the Taiwan Strait.' What it means is that China will not remove its missiles [targeting Taiwan] unless Taiwan is determined to terminate its substantive military alliance with the United States. Lo's viewpoint happened to come at the worst possible moment and rattled the nerves of Taiwan, the United States and China. ..."

D) "U.S. Military Refuses to Carry Heavy-lift Machinery; Its Good Intention to Assist Taiwan Gets Snapped"

Journalist Wu Ming-chieh wrote in an analysis in the KMT-leaning "China Times" [circulation: 120,000] (8/18):

"For the first time in over nearly fifty years, militaries from both Taiwan and the United States will start a joint humanitarian rescue operation today. The U.S. military planned to send four helicopters to assist in [Taiwan's] rescue operations, but based on safety concerns, the assistance provided by the U.S. military will be

limited; the U.S. military, in the end, expressed that it is only willing to provide MH-53E Sea Dragon helicopters to carry an 8.5 ton mini excavator. As for [using] the 12 ton big excavator that has already sat on the Tainan Air Force Base, the U.S. military already said no! ...

"Such a development was actually the result of Taiwan's Central Emergency Operation Center, which has missed the best timing for immediate rescue operations. In the end, [Taiwan] has not only made its request for U.S. assistance futile but has also reduced the significance of the U.S. military's record-breaking efforts to offer its assistance to Taiwan. ... Because of Taiwan's delay, the U.S. military rescue operations have been transformed from purely humanitarian aid to a sensitive diplomatic rescue [operation]. To prevent Beijing's condemnation, the U.S. military can only make changes on some symbolic details, such as sending the defensive MH-53E Sea Dragon helicopters to replace the originally planned more offensive CH-53E Super Sea Stallion helicopters that can carry troops. ..."

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